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ERSES

R. W. MACKENNA

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## VERSES



Mackenna, Robert William

VERSES BY ROBERT  
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("DAVID LOCKHART")

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM BRYCE, 54 LOTHIAN STREET

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO. LTD.

PR 6025

A 2437A6

1897

To the  
STUDENTS OF MY TIME  
AT  
EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY  
1892-1897

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

SHELLEY.



## PREFACE

*Most of the following verses have appeared at intervals during the last few years in the pages of The Student, and are now collected at the request of a large number of the readers of that magazine.*

*Written, for the greater part, in the odd moments of a busy course, and as a relaxation from more arduous occupations, they were never intended for dissemination outside student circles, and make no pretensions to literary merit. The melancholy note which pervades some of them is explained by the fact that they were composed under the shadow of impending examinations. None of them are, in any sense, autobiographical.*

*The first part of the book contains verses on themes of general interest ; the second is devoted to productions peculiarly medical, the allusions in which can be appreciated only by those who have had a professional training. It has been thought better not to append a glossary of medical terms, as those for whom the verses are intended will understand the references without it ; while with such an aid the uninitiated could understand only in part.*

R. W. MACKENNA.

EDINBURGH,

October 1897.



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*CARMINA CADAVERIS*

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# VERSES

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## Spenser in Ireland

(ENGLISH CLASS PRIZE POEM, EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY, 1895)

THE share of Life cuts deeply through the path  
Which mortals fashion for themselves to tread ;  
Man dreams of harvest, but the aftermath  
Is all he garners for his children's bread.  
Time changes everything ; to-morrow's dead  
Are those who lived and loved but yesterday ;  
And they, whose trembling feet are sometimes led  
Up Fortune's golden ladder, with dismay  
Feel the bright rungs too oft beneath them sink  
away.

\*

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\*

Colin the gentle, in the ashen shade,  
Trilled on his oaten pipe a simple song  
Of life and love, such as the Mantuan made  
The fragrant groves of Italy among,  
And at the Muse's shrine his censer swung  
Odorous of incense, sweetly redolent  
Of wayside flowers, that all about them flung  
In rich profusion shafts of sweetest scent,  
That to the vagrant air a subtle fragrance lent.

But Fortune called him from his gracious task,  
And led him o'er the crisped ocean ways  
To a fair land that, like a bird, doth bask  
Amid the weltering waters, where the maze  
Of discord winds forever, and the days  
Ebb to the babble of incessant strife ;  
Thither she led him, and amid the frays  
Of nations plunged him, into dangers rife,  
Where War's wild fury cast a bloodstain on his life.

And then the quiet seeker after Truth—  
The courtier shining in his sovereign's eyes—  
Saw grisly Mars shoot out his bloody tooth,  
And heard the wail of children upward rise  
Trembling to God ; or shuddered at the cries  
That burst from broken hearts, and desolate  
Homes where the body of a father lies  
Drenched in his blood, and at the woeful fate  
Of wives and children shed a tear compassionate.

The blaze of War was quenched, the purple cloud  
Blown into tatters by the wanton wind,  
Murder was stifled in his swarthy shroud,  
And the fierce clang of battle left behind ;  
Then Cynthia, to her suitors ever kind,  
Gifted her poet with a castle fair,  
O'er whose grey walls the pensive ivy twined  
In sombre loveliness, while here and there  
A trailing branch of flowers shed fragrance through  
the air.

There, in the evening stillness, when the moon—  
A silver sickle in an ebon sky—  
Flashed o'er the drifting clouds, and, from her  
swoon

Of darkness, Night awoke in brilliancy,  
The poet, gazing with his dreamy eye  
Through the wide mullioned casement, saw the  
plain  
Peopled with knights, or, in his fantasy,  
Watched Gloriana and her faëry train  
Holding their court within the forest's leafy fane.

Or through his drooping eyelids, half awake,  
Saw a gay sloop shoot outwards from the shore,  
And of itself glide through the placid lake,  
Sweeping the water-lilies from before  
Like a white-bosomed, stately swan, while o'er  
Its rounded prow the laughing waters flung  
An arch of foam, and, as the maids of yore  
Sewed on their tapestry tales of love and wrong,  
He wove his dreams into a web of living song.

And then the "Shepherd of the Ocean" \* came  
Wet from his flock, and by the reedy marge  
Of wimpling Mulla saw the poet frame  
And fashion melodies, or heard the large  
Full-throated measures from his lips discharge  
Their freight of gold ; or underneath a sky  
Dappled with cloudlets, in their painted barge  
Out on the mere, with thoughts in harmony,  
They twain would muse upon Life's mutability.

All things are mutable ! Above the hills  
That girdled the horizon rose the hand  
Of red Rebellion, and the mountain rills  
Blushed with the blood of many a slaughtered  
band ;  
And Rage and Rapine reeled across the land  
In a wild fury, and the poet's bower,  
Plundered and kindled, by the breezes fanned,  
Crumbled to ashes, and a tender flower  
Whose bud had scarcely ope'd was blighted in  
that hour.

\* Sir Walter Raleigh.

Outcast, forsaken, o'er the sea he fled ;  
Oh that *thus* Colin should come home again !  
Shattered his dreams of Fortune, for his bread  
Almost dependent on his fellow-men,  
He drooped, as droops a blasted tree, and then  
Passed into silence. Life had been a game  
Played in the dark with Destiny ; yet, when  
His days were perfected, he left to fame  
A wealth of precious song and an undying name.

## The Isle of Calypso

FROM THE GREEK

STRAIGHTWAY did Hermes bind beneath his feet  
His golden-gleaming sandals, heaven-wrought,  
Which bear him o'er the sea and o'er the land  
That knows no limit, swiftly as the wind.

His wand he took, wherewith he lulls the eyes  
Of whom he will, or backward draws again  
The veil of sleep, and, clasping in his hand  
This sceptre, forth he fled along, and from  
The cloud-capped peak Pierian his flight  
He bent precipitant towards the deep.

Then, as the seamew skimming o'er the wave  
Seeketh her food among the awful bays  
Of the unfruitful ocean, dipping oft  
Her spacious pinions in the billow's crest,  
Did Hermes speed across the swelling tide.  
But when he reached the isle that beacons far  
Across the main, from out the azure sea  
He rose, and sped across the land until

The vaulted cave, wherein the lovely nymph  
Of braided tresses dwelleth, loomed in view.  
The nymph he found within ; upon the hearth  
A fire blazed brightly, while afar the isle  
Was redolent of cedars smoothly cleft  
And of the burning cypress. And the nymph  
Warbled melodious as she plied the loom  
And shot her golden shuttle through the web.

Around the spacious grot was blossoming  
A grove luxuriant, where poplar black,  
Alder and fragrant cypress did attune  
Their trembling leaves. There many a long-winged  
bird,  
Falcons and owls and shrieking cormorants  
That haunt the ocean, built their lofty nests.  
And all about the hollow cave there trailed  
A mantling vine with luscious fruit bedecked :  
While from one fount four lucid runnels welled,  
And wimpled each its devious bed along :  
And downy meads of violet and thyme,  
Kissed by the waters, shed their fragrance there.

.

So fair the sight a never-dying god  
That thither came might joy within his heart.

There stood the messenger, the Argicide,  
And gazed with wonder over all the scene ;  
Then, when his raptured soul had drunk its fill  
Of Nature's loveliness, his way he went  
Into the spacious cave. The graceful nymph  
Failed not to know him, for the deathless gods  
Well know their fellows even though apart  
They have their dwellings ; then the goddess spread  
Before the herald food ambrosial,  
And mixed the ruby nectar, while he ate,  
And with her banquet well was satisfied.

## The Secret of the Sea

THE back of the sea is scarred by the lash  
Of the angry wind ;  
And the tumbling billows plunge and splash  
At the foot of the iron crags, or dash  
Up the shingly banks in a foaming sheet,  
With a low harsh hiss, as the breakers meet  
And the pebbles grind.

A maiden stands on the crest of the shore,  
In the dark, alone ;  
And her wind-tossed tresses round her pour  
In a wayward stream ; while the seagulls soar  
Above her, and wheel, and dip, and rise,  
And startle the night with their eerie cries  
And their frightened moan.

She looks through the mist of her tear-damp eyes  
O'er the boiling sea,  
And a prayer steals up from her heart, and flies  
On trembling wings to the wind-vexed skies,—  
“ Father ! my loved one safely keep,  
Bring him back o'er the face of the pathless deep,  
Bring him back to me ! ”

The wind shrieks over the sandy dunes

    In its wild career ;

But the wail of the sea into silence swoons,

While a wave in a hollow gullet croons,—

“ He is dead ! In the darkness of ocean’s breast

Thy lover is rocked to unending rest ” ;—

    But she cannot hear.

## The Enigma of Life

DAY bursts in glory o'er the purple hills,  
And all the earth in dewy robes is drest ;  
Grey night glides down, and all the land is laid  
Asleep within the slumbrous lap of rest.

So o'er the margin of the years our lives  
Leap into being, slowly climb the hill,  
With trembling footsteps stumble down the slope,  
Then pass into the shade, and all is still.

And the loved hand, that warmly clasped our own  
In sweetest friendship, cold and nerveless lies ;  
Hushed is the voice that whispered tenderly,  
And quenched the light of love that filled the  
eyes.

And dust returns to dust, and dear ones dead  
Are laid for ever 'neath the flower-strewn sod ;  
Yet why stand idly weeping, if our lives  
Are passing moments in the Life of God ?

## Dead !

DEAD! In the bleakness of a withered love  
Her soul has starved. A year ago there was  
No happier smile than hers, no sweeter face,  
But now the dew of death is on her brow,  
And Daisy sleeps.

She gave her heart to him,  
And with her maiden faithfulness she loved  
And trusted him. But *he* played with her heart,  
And, when his sport was done, tossed it away,  
And in the silence of her breast it broke.

She drooped and faded, and when Autumn flung  
His russet mantle o'er the leafy woods,  
And the red foliage fluttered from the trees,  
She died. Heap flowers upon her grave, for she  
Is dead! Nought but a memory! a mere  
Dream-face that cometh from the bygone days!  
A sweet sad dream! My Daisy, come again!  
O God! *I* loved her too, and she is dead.

## Magdalene

ONLY a woman lost to shame,  
Cold and unlovely she lies dead ;  
One of the fallen over whom  
No tears of holy grief are shed ;  
Yet once, perhaps, *her* childish voice  
Thrilled some fond mother's heart with glee,  
As with her infant hands she filled  
Her lap with flowers less pure than she.

A few short years ! a winsome maid !  
A villain with his arts of hell  
Weaving his lies, and she, poor child,  
Loving too much, had faith, and fell :  
Fell, as the petals of a flower  
Drop in the dust ; and then, disgrace,  
Anger, reproaches : till she fled  
From her relentless father's face.

Fled from her home ! and never knew  
How sad remorse wept o'er her name :  
O God, that man unsullied goes,  
While weaker woman bears the shame !

Heartsore and weary, friendless, starved  
    (Hunger is virtue's winding-sheet),  
She sank, until in tears she trod  
    Her Passion Path \* along the street.

Women less tempted swept along,  
    And on her heartless glances cast,  
Or drew their righteous robes aside,  
    Lest she should touch them as she passed.  
How often, when her memory turned  
    Its pages, did she steal away  
Into the darkness, where her heart  
    Bled in its own Gethsemane ?

God only knows ! But when the thread  
    Of each man's life is gathered up,  
And the last Magdalene has drained  
    Down to the dregs her bitter cup,  
Perhaps, while she stands fearlessly  
    Brave before Him who made her just,  
God in His righteous wrath shall crush  
    Man, her betrayer, into dust.

\* Via Dolorosa.

## The Rose and the Leaf

A ROSEBUD nestled on a leaf,  
And hid its blushes in the shade,  
While to the sun-kissed flower the leaf  
Sweet whispers of devotion made ;  
But, in the dusk of morning time,  
Came heedlessly a passer-by  
And plucked the dew-impearled rose,  
And left the lonely leaf to die.

I loved her : she was fair to see,  
Tender and true and nobly good,  
She turned my days to gladness by  
The sweetness of her womanhood.

\* \* \* \* \*

Death sought the garden of my heart,  
And found my rosebud hidden there ;  
He took her to himself, and I  
Am left alone in my despair.

## The Thrush

OUT on the leafy hawthorn in the brake  
The speckled throistle pipes his sober lay.

No honeyed flood, such as the nightingale  
Pours from his throbbing throat in the hushed night  
When the pale moon floats o'er the drifted banks  
Of fleecy cloud, rolls from his swelling breast.  
His is an humbler lay, yet sweeter far  
Than that weird siren-song that rent the soul  
Of him who dared, as olden minstrels tell,  
The swinge of surges on the Scyllan shoal.  
He warbles to his mate of Spring, who steals,  
Wet from the wintry woods in mantle green,  
Over the dewy meads, and how the flowers  
Dapple the fields where'er her lily feet  
Have pressed their mould. No melancholy note  
Frets his mellifluous voicings, all his joy  
Flows in his song. Quaver, and trill and shake,  
Blent into dulcet harmony, float out  
Upon the listening air ; but darkness falls  
O'er the green woodland and the distant glade ;  
And the sweet singer ends his melody.

## Across the Years

WHAT music trembles through the night  
Beneath the cold eternal sky,  
As if some spirit cheered its flight  
With notes of dulcet melody?

\* \* \* \* \*

The pent-up music of a soul,  
That died with half its song unsung,  
Across the silent years doth roll  
In liquid beauty from its tongue.

And love-lit eyes peer through the gloom  
That fills the valley of the Past,  
And, like a blush, the rosy bloom  
Of youth on withered cheeks is cast ;

And hand clasps hand within the veil  
Of hallowed thoughts made sweet by tears,  
And hearts throb sadly at the tale  
The song sings of forgotten years.

## Friends

———A friend is a priceless jewel,  
Better than all that an Empress wears ;  
Gold is but dust in the eyes of those  
Who know that the love of a friend is theirs.

## Failures

With ready hands, our wreaths of bay  
We shower upon the heads of those,  
Who proudly up the golden way  
Of Fame, with echoing feet, have trod ;  
While ill-starred brothers lying near  
Amid the dust we pass in haste,  
Too blind to know that failure here  
May be success with God.

## On the Moor

THE grey mist lifts from off the purple heather,  
Wet with a myriad diamond drops of dew,  
Over God's giant hills the sun is leaping,  
Impetuous to climb the arch of blue,  
While here and there a trembling coil of smoke  
Marks the white shielings of the moorland folk.

High overhead a dauntless lark is tossing  
From his sweet throat a wild, wild madrigal,  
Whose cunning notes cleave, like a shaft, the silence,  
And make the voiceless moor-wind musical :  
Why should such melody awake regret,  
O heart of mine ? Why can I not forget ?

Twenty long years ago, on such a morning,  
Bright with the promise of the coming day,  
We parted here ; she, smothering her anger,  
Bent her dear head, and softly stole away :  
Passed out of sight : sweet flower of womanhood,  
Misunderstanding, and misunderstood.

Cold in my pride, I sought the restless city,  
Where, in the clamour of the crowded street,  
Sick of remembrance, weary of forgetting  
Her whom in fantasy I loved to meet,  
Idly I dreamed ; she never came again,  
And hungry hope sank slowly into pain.

Under the stalwart palm-trees she is sleeping  
In the quiet bosom of the tranquil West :  
No heather waves, no lark above is piping  
The sinless melody she loved the best :  
But the sad waves, stopped in their eager race,  
Lap murmurous about her resting-place.

Around the moments of our deepest anguish  
In after-days the sweetest memories cling :  
We fret ourselves, but cannot read the mystery—  
Life without Sorrow were a joyless thing :  
God grant that, when we fall amid the strife,  
Heaven may be sweeter for the pain of Life.

## The River

ALL is still. The stars are dimples  
On the cheek of Night ;  
Down the glade the river wimples  
As it fades from sight ;  
And its music, faint and dying,  
Ripples far away,  
While the night wind, soft-replying,  
Wakens memory.

## Faces in the Street

AIMLESS I wander through the city streets,  
An unknown unit in the throng and press,  
Where each man is a little island girt  
By his own narrow sea of selfishness.

Held in the tangle of the crowd I watch  
The changing faces, as they come and go  
Like wayward spindrift that the wilful wind,  
Wildly incessant, chases to and fro.

Haggard with hate or bitter with despair  
Onward they sweep, a long unbroken train;  
Lips ripe for laughter, faces glad with youth,  
Eyes lit with love, or cold with proud disdain.

Sometimes a face sweet with a glad content,  
And holy with a faith that wavers not,  
Steals on my gaze out of the tedious crowd  
With the crisp freshness of a flower unsought.

Dreaming, I turn to watch it, and, as though  
The chains that bind me down to earth were riven,  
My heart leaps from the dust of common things,  
And rises for a moment nearer heaven.

## At Eventide

PALE Evening, brooding o'er the earth  
In robes of dewy fragrance drest,  
Weeps o'er the flowery meads and drops  
A tear upon the lily's breast.

## Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow

WE look into our hearts, and turning over  
 The fragrant rose-leaves of old memories,  
 Sigh for the dreams whose ghostly incompleteness  
 Haunts, shadow-like, our yesterdays ;  
 And childishly we think that, if before us  
 The vanished years lay heaped like burnished gold,  
 Each moment we should fill with brave endeavour,  
 Not with elusive visions as of old.

With hands of faith we grasp the vacant future,  
 To-day we plan, to-morrow we shall build :  
 The ashes of the morrow fall around us  
 With our ambitions unfulfilled ;  
 And giant hopes, whose summits challenge heaven,  
 We chase through leagues of unproductive years,  
 But never grasp them, while within our footprints  
 The poppy-flower of Indolence appears.

What are our wild-tongued boasts of godlike wisdom,  
 If we are blind and cannot understand  
 How, in the narrow present, past and future  
 Shoulder to shoulder stand ?

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW 37

Yesterday is twin-brother with To-morrow,  
The past is built out of our dead To-days,  
The future is the present framed in distance  
And beautiful with vast uncertainties.

To-day is with us. Let us cease repining  
For lost occasions and for things undone ;  
And let the future hoard its gracious secrets  
Until the morrow is begun ;  
So let us mould into the little moments  
Great deeds, whose nobleness shall perfect praise,  
And, striving ever, make the too-brief present  
The brightest jewel in our crown of days.

## With a Rose

DEAREST ! I prithee take this flower  
And wear it near thy heart,  
That it may know the happiness  
Of being where thou art ;  
The dewdrops to its petals cling,  
And in the starlight shine,  
Yet is its witching loveliness  
Not half so sweet as thine.

“A Little Child shall lead Them”

THE world may call it maudlin sentiment,

But, when I look into a child's great eyes,

I see, as in the mirror of the years,

The gentle Nazarene in beauty rise,

And say,—I learned it at my mother's knee—

“Suffer the little ones to come to Me.”

## On the Wings of the Dying Year

A STILLNESS broods on the earth like the heavy  
 shadow of death,  
 And only a single star looks down from the sable  
 sky,  
 And on weary wings the year, like a wounded bird,  
 sweeps past  
 To sink in the fathomless mists of time, to swoon  
 in the dark and die.

For the lily is dead in the field, and the blush of the  
 rose has paled,  
 And hushed are the wild love-notes that the  
 throstle piped in the spring :  
 For the autumn leaves have dropped on the bier of  
 the bygone days,  
 And the snow floats down like a plume that falls  
 from an angel's spotless wing.

What of the rosy dreams, and the golden hopes that  
 shone,  
 As we stood, in the dusk of the dawn, on the brink  
 of the fathomless year ?

ON THE WINGS OF THE DYING YEAR 41

The dreams, like a morning cloud, have passed into  
nothingness,

And instead of the joy of a hope fulfilled, we have  
only the scald of a tear.

Thus hath it ever been ; for the path of the sons of  
men

Is laid in a darkened vale, where the briars of  
sorrow abound :

For silver is wooed from the rock by the biting  
breath of the fire,

And only by tribulation and pain can the heart of  
a man be found.

But out of the dust shall rise, like the Phœnix,  
another year,

And the torch of the Dawn shall light the hills  
of the East once more,

And the blossom shall cling to the boughs, and the  
air shall be full of song,

And the murmurous waves of the sea shall beat  
their ceaseless tune on the shore.

42 ON THE WINGS OF THE DYING YEAR

For the tale repeats itself, and the soul of man is the  
same,

Though the countless æons come, and the myriad  
cycles go ;

But the year that dawns may bring, as a gem in her  
hidden store,

Eden the long-lost back to the earth ; we may  
hope, but we cannot know.

# Carmina Cadaveris :

VERSES FROM THE DISSECTING-ROOM

AND

ELSEWHERE.

*De mortuis nil nisi*—BONES.

## Prologue

My Muse,  
That erst on buoyant wings  
O'er leagues of flowery land hath flown,  
Aside her ornate mantle flings  
Over the grave of former things,  
And, ghoul-like, pecks a bone.

“Virginibus Puerisque”

TOUCH not! These songs were never meant  
For eyes so innocent as thine,  
They reek of the dissecting-room,  
Of blood and bones, of weeds and wine ;  
A streamlet of unholy gore  
Runs crimson over every page,  
Bones talk, and half-dissected “stiffs”  
Shake their thin limbs in futile rage ;  
No, no ! Such gruesome words and deeds  
Are only meet for sterner man,  
They’re far too coarse for one who loves  
The watered milk of *Annie Swan*.

## “For Valour”

(AFTER KIPLING—A LONG WAY)

PERHAPS you think I ain't o' much account,—  
A bloomin' corp in a dissectin'-room,—  
But when you've heard the story I'm agoin' to  
recount,  
You'll be sayin' I'm deservin' of a tomb  
With the honourable dead,  
Who for hearth and home have bled,  
While here I am a-lyin' in this butcher's shop instead.

I've seen a bit o' service in my time,  
And I owns a stock o' very decent scars,  
For I've followed Britain's standard into many a  
furrin' clime,  
And I've fought through a half-a-dozen wars;  
But here I am to-day,  
In this unexpected way,  
A-learnin' raw recruits to know a man's Anatomy.

I was in the Rooshian War o' '54,  
And I've laid among the trenches night and day,

With the shells a-bustin' round us, while, above the  
cannon's roar,

You could hear the shrapnel hurtle on its way,

And the pewter bullets sing,

As they passed us on the wing,

A song that kind of made you feel they'd know the  
way to sting.

You'll have heard about the gallant Light Brigade,—

How it rode into the bloomin' jaws of hell,—

I was in it, but a Rooshian who was skilly at his trade

Jabbed a bay'net in my belly and I fell,

But I pulled him to the ground,

And I felt in dooty bound

To make cat's-meat of the innards of the sanguinary  
hound.

But the place where I got pulped the worst

Was in Injy, when the Mutiny was on ;

We was marchin' up to Delhi, where the rebels  
rallied first,

And nearly half the journey we had gone,

When we innercently strayed

Into an ambushade,

That the dirty heathen scuts had gone and  
treacherously laid.

With a screechin', fit to wake the shrouded dead,  
Down upon us from the hills the heathen raced,  
Each with fifteen feet o' turban round his coffee-  
coloured head  
And an inch or two of *kharki* round his waist.  
Half-a-dozen made for me,  
And I jolly well could see  
That my chances were as rummy as they possibly  
could be.

I don't remember much about the fight,  
But, when my battered senses came again,  
Half-a-dozen ribs was broken, and I'd lost the  
power of sight,  
And my left leg was a-hangin' by the skin;  
But, what's a pint of blood  
When it's for your country's good?  
And the surgeon patched me up again as neatly  
as he could.

I never got a medal nor a clasp,  
And perhaps the world never heard my name,  
But the three essentials of a British soldier I  
could grasp,—  
Do your dooty, kill your man, and take the  
blame;

And though I ain't V.C.,  
I think you will agree  
That I should have had a better fate nor *this*  
awaitin' me.

### An Epitaph

THERE'S a maxim in Latin you'll frequently see  
Engraven on storied tomb-stones,  
But anatomists hold it should properly be  
*De mortuis nil nisi*—Bones.

## Ars longa : Vita brevis

Working man Called Dan.	Doctor says, "Bad case."
Saturday, Gets his pay.	Empty bed, Daniel dead.
Public-house, Big carouse.	Drama ends, No friends.
Chucked out, Knocks about.	Winter gloom, Dissecting-room.
Falls asleep, Snow deep.	Fragrant whiff, Fresh <i>stiff</i> .
Pleurisy, <i>R.I.E.</i>	Students view Subject new.

## Man

“ In the world there is nothing great but man ; in man there is nothing great but mind.”

*(In the World)*

MAN, in his moment of arrogant pride,  
Forgetting his lowly estate,  
Vaunteth himself as a god, and boasts  
That he alone is great.

*(In the Dissecting-room)*

But man is less than the meanest flower  
That quivers with life in the light,  
When the lock-gate lifts and the spirit ebbs  
Into the Infinite.

## In the Blues

WITH shallow sobs the fire has flickered out,  
Midnight has boomed dull from the distant Tron,  
Ghostly the wind moans round the chimney-tops,  
And all my hopes of getting through are gone ;—  
Cold feet drive many men to suicide,  
And, musing thus, I lay my books aside.

“To be or not to be ?” Life is a medley  
Played on a lute with many broken strings,  
Half sweet, half sorrowful, whose notes return  
Back to the chaos whence their being springs,  
And I am weary as a little child  
On whose long play the summer sun has smiled.

So, shall I end it all ? Oh ! it were sweet  
To silence all the discord and forget  
Life's blows, life's tempests, and the torturing hate  
Of men, their sorrows and their ceaseless fret :  
—The hunger of a hope unsatisfied :—  
Bitter the *Second*,—welcome suicide !

Strychnine ? Well, No ! It's hardly good enough.  
Of course it does its duty, but, you see,

It knots the muscles in tetanic spasms,  
And death is heralded by agony:  
Besides, it makes one's face convulsive, while  
I should prefer, when dead, to wear a smile.

And then there's Prussic Acid. Well, it's quick  
And very merciful: only a cry,  
A short shrill heart-shriek like a wounded deer's,  
And then you reel and fall and gasp and die.  
No, thank you! It's too common:—what you get  
The villain using in a Novelette.

No more of drugs! I'll try another plan:  
I've got a Colt's revolver hidden in  
My writing-desk, with it I'd do the deed  
Were I not anxious to avoid a din;  
I would! I'd bang a bullet through my heart,  
Were it less noisy and less void of Art.

I've got it! Let me cut a *radial*,  
And, as my bounding life-stream flows away,  
I'll trace a pulse-wave for friend Rutherford,  
And, dying, write a brief epitome  
Of all my symptoms; thus I'll leave a name  
Honoured by Science, though obscured by Shame.

Ay, ay! To-morrow, when the punctual gun  
 Roars its loud message from the Castle Rock,  
 From 'Varsity and Hospital I know  
 Students will pour, and listen with a shock,  
 As newsboys rush on them from every side  
 With "*Spatch* and *News*,—A Student's Suicide."

The papers go like wildfire. I can see,  
 In fancy, half-a-dozen round one page:—  
 "Who is it?"—"Smith?"—"The *Dickens*!"—  
 "When?" and "How?"  
 "Poor beggar!"—"Was he *stony*?"—"What's  
 his age?"  
 "I knew him well!"—"He was a chum of mine!"—  
 "I was his dresser when he worked in *Nine*."

And so they'll talk, scattered in little groups,  
 (For tapping strictured feelings gives relief);  
 And then they'll go about their work again,  
 For students haven't time for idle grief,  
 And when a fellow shuffles off the scene  
 Things just go on as though he had not been.

Of course, there's bound to be a "Sectio,"  
 And Littlejohn will crack his usual jest;

And then *The Student*'s sure to have a "par,"  
About my "sad removal,"—and the rest ;  
And you can bet your boots, the S.R.C.  
Will send my folks a vote of sympathy.

Whew ! I'd forgotten ! What about my girl?—  
Leal-hearted lassie with the violet eyes,—  
I know she'll cut up awful ; why, she weeps  
Even when a thirty-second cousin dies.  
Dear little thing !—Some sorrows are but brief,  
*She'd* perish in the desert of her grief.

I shouldn't like that either. It were cruel  
To rob the earth of such a flower as she ;  
Besides, on second thoughts, I hardly know  
How the old world could prosper wanting *me*,  
So meantime, so to speak, I'll go on bail,  
And maybe, after all, I shall not fail.

## Monumentum ære Perennius

I ONCE was a tramp, and I wandered about  
 Through the country with rollicking glee :  
 I boozed and I begged, I never did more,  
 (For half-an-hour's work made my hands very sore,  
 And ours is the land of the free),  
 But I never once thought that *I* and *Myself*  
 Were any one other than *Me*.

But now that, a subject, I'm riven and carved  
 By embryo medical men,  
 I find that in life I was only a sham,  
 For a poor bit of patchwork is all that I am,  
 An extract of others, for when  
 My skin is peeled off me I see I'm a fraud—  
 The jackdaw in feathers again.

When alive I was frequently called to the bar  
 As Thomas Brown, *alias* Jones,  
 Etcet'ra, *ad lib.* ; but I never once thought  
 How plural I was, till up here I was brought  
 Where I learn that even my bones  
 And my nerves and my vessels are named after men,  
 Who have quarried from me their tombstones.

There's *Scarpa's* Triangle, there's *Hunter's* Canal,  
 Both of which you will find in my thigh ;  
 With *Arnold's* Foramen—the size of a pin—  
 The Membrane of *Reissner*, the Zonule of *Zinn*,  
 Which is somewhere, I think, in my eye ;  
 And the Valve of *Viessens* and *Jacobson's* Nerve,  
 And the Lobulus *Spigelii*.

A bee in one's bonnet is quite bad enough,  
 So at least it is frequently said ;  
 But what do you think of a fellow who wears  
 The sheath of a *Huxley* round each of his hairs,  
 While the fissures of *Sylvius* spread  
 Through his brain, and *Rolando* and Mr. *Mouro*  
 Have permanent homes in his head.

From what I have said, though I might have said  
 more,

I think you will easily see  
 That I'm hardly myself, for, to come to an end,  
 I am only a polyglot kind of compend.  
 Of Anatomist's Biographie,  
 For with *Poupart* and *Alcock* and *Galen* and *Nuck*  
 There is hardly a corner for *Me*.

## The Land of "Laughing-Gas "

I BREATHED a whiff of laughing-gas and soared  
 Through a dense bank of clouds, and found myself  
 In a fair land. The drowsy zephyrs clung  
 To the thick drifts of pearly blossom, which  
 Breathed incense from the branches ; here and  
     there,

A bird poured forth a honeyed jet of song.  
 The weary bees, clad in their dusty coats  
 Of spangled mail, sick of the scented breath  
 Of balmy flowers, dozed in the chalices  
 Of honeysuckles, poppies, hyacinths.  
 The rivers lay asleep beneath the sun ;  
 The sloop-like leaves of water-lilies hid  
 Their cup-shaped flowers, that floated lazily  
 A-dream upon the bosom of the waves.  
 Down to the runnel's margent ran a mead  
 Of fragrant thyme and purple pimpernel,  
 Where in the coolness of a sheltered vale,  
 Lulled by the slumbrous music of the winds  
 And by a lute-like voice that sang of rest,

I stretched myself upon a velvet slope  
Of marish moss, and, sinking down, I heard  
The lute-like voice grow fainter, fainter still,  
Distant and dream-like, lose itself in space,—  
And I awoke upon the dentist's chair.

## Cetacean William

SIR WILLIAM stood beside a whale,  
And scanned its greasy hide,  
And watched while Mr Simpson plunged  
A scalpel in its side.

The knight, he smiled, and clasped his hands  
Beneath his broad coat-tails—  
“All men have hobbies, it is said,  
And mine,—well, mine is whales.

“The whale is very interesting,  
Without dubiety,  
And makes a first-rate paper for  
The Royal Society.

“And when its bones have been exposed,  
In process of dissection,  
We'll macerate and mount them for  
My world-renowned collection.”

## The Song of "The Second"

WITH forehead swathed in a bandage,  
With eyes as heavy as lead,  
I sit at work in my dreary "digs"  
When I ought to be in my bed.  
Grind, grind, grind!  
And I turn the leaves with a sigh,  
For the session has almost come to an end,  
And "The Second" is drawing nigh.

Work, work, work,  
Through the dismal winter day,  
And grind, grind, grind  
At my Cunningham, Ellis and Gray,  
As I try to follow out  
The vessels and nerves of my part,  
Till, muddled, I dream that the crural ring  
Is a functionless valve in the heart.

Grind, grind, grind,  
When the too-brief day is dead,  
Till my epigastric region fills  
With an awful sinking dread,

62 THE SONG OF "THE SECOND"

And my red corpuscles pale,  
And a dark speck dims my sight,  
But I rub my eyes and comfort myself,—  
"It is only a leucocyte."

O Fraser and Rutherford !  
Be merciful once, I pray,  
For I'm lost in a terrible wilderness  
Of rhubarb and scammony :  
And my doses get worse and worse  
The more that I try to cram,  
Till I give magnesiï sulph. by the grain,  
And strychnine is safe by the drachm.

Castor and Croton Oil,  
Cannabis Indica,  
Hales and Brunner and Lieberkühn,  
Jalap, Myristica ;  
Bowman and Flögel's Line,  
Stratum Malpighii,  
Jacobson's Nerve and Cholesterin,  
Tensores Tympani.

Sometimes my head drops down  
 Asleep on my wasted hands,  
 But only to dream of the drugs that come  
 From Brunton and other *lands* :  
 Dream, dream, dream  
 Of physiological fact,  
 Till I ride the cardiac cycle round  
 The cross pyramidal tract.

Cram, cram, cram,  
 Till my brain is ready to burst ;  
 Ah, surely, of all man's possible ills  
 "The Second" is far the worst !  
 For the Caudate Nucleus  
 Is a twist in the devil's tail,  
 And every other word on the page  
 Whispers,—“ You're going to fail.

Ruta graveolens,  
 Plasma, and lymph, and chyle,  
 Hydrochloride of hæmatin,  
 And the sodium salts of bile ;

64 THE SONG OF "THE SECOND"

Ancient anatomy tips,  
    " Bodfi " and " Parish Priest,"  
Wantonly dance in my cerebral cells,  
    " Specimen," " Salasap," " Beast."

Work, work, work,  
    I've only a fortnight more :  
Work, though I half expect  
    I'll be spun, as I was before :  
For I cannot remember a fact  
    Of the thousand and one I have read,  
So I'll hopelessly put my lectures away,  
    And I'll go to my slumberless bed.





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